

young men were exposed to tobacco for the first time when they entered the military service. Free cigarettes were provided to them and thus a habit was started during that time of service.

We must ensure that any man or woman who became addicted and consequently developed health problems due to the consumption of tobacco must be given the health care they were promised when they enlisted to serve this country.

My bill would establish a trust fund to be known as the Veterans Tobacco Trust Fund, providing that if a tobacco settlement is enacted, then \$3 billion would be credited to the trust fund. The funds would be made available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish medical care and to conduct medical research, rehabilitation research, and health systems research related to tobacco addiction.

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I also want to clear up an issue which has caused a great deal of consternation among the veterans and here on the House floor. I am referring, of course, to the recent vote we had on H.R. 2400, the Transportation Equity Act.

First, let us be clear on how this evolved. This was proposed by the Clinton administration in the fiscal year 1999 budget, VA budget, in which the President requested that VA disability benefits for tobacco-related illnesses be repealed. I opposed the President's proposal and its inclusion in H.R. 2400, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st century. I voted for the Obey amendment that sent H.R. 2400 back to conference and to instruct the conferees to remove the language reducing service-connected disability compensation to veterans for smoking-related illnesses. Unfortunately this motion was defeated.

I also joined the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), chairman of our Committee on Veterans' Affairs, in sending a letter to the Speaker and to the minority leader, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), voicing strong opposition to any provision that would offset veterans' benefits to pay for other programs.

Regrettably, we were not successful in our effort to prevent the administration's proposal to repeal VA disability compensation benefits for tobacco-related disabilities from being passed in part of H.R. 2400. However, we did prevail in providing benefit increases for veterans going to college on the GI bill, severely disabled veterans needing modifications for automobiles or their homes, and widows of veterans who died from service-connected disability.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Health, I am committed to finding the funds to compensate the VA for the cost of providing health care for them, including smoking-related illnesses. That is why I developed the Veterans Tobacco Trust Fund Bill, so that funding will be made available should a na-

tional tobacco settlement be enacted into law.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in my efforts to help our Nation's veterans and sponsor my bill.

ADOPT A RELIGIOUS PRISONER IN VIETNAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ) is recognized during morning hour debates for 3 minutes.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to participate in the Adopt a Religious Prisoner in Vietnam Campaign, sponsored by the Hoa Hao Buddhist Church of Southern California. Religious believers around the world often suffer abuses, including beatings, tortures, extended incarceration and, yes, even death at the hands of their government, unless their leaders intervene.

As Members of Congress, it is our responsibility to highlight the ongoing repression against religion in Vietnam and the plight of many clergy members and lay leaders who are being detained because of their faith. Reports show that the Hoa Hao Buddhist Church continues to be suppressed. All religious activities and ceremonies are prohibited. Assembly of more than three persons is forbidden, and all assets and properties are being confiscated.

Religious expression is a fundamental right of all people, both here and abroad, and I believe that we should do all we can to affirm this principle. For too long, imprisoned people of faith have been forgotten. With Members of Congress adopting prisoners, we can successfully advocate for religious prisoners suffering persecution at the hands of the Vietnamese government. I adopted Mr. Tran Huu Duyen and Mr. Nam Liem to raise awareness among U.S. decision-makers and the public about religious repercussion in communist Vietnam. What crimes did these men commit to suffer such hard prison sentences?

Mr. Liem is a 58 year old Buddhist priest who practices religion at a small family temple in Vietnam, and since 1975 he has been arrested and detained by the communist authorities over 50 times for having refused to abandon his religious practice. To date, he has not been released from prison.

After the Communist takeover, Mr. Huu was arrested and charged with plotting to overthrow the people's government, for participating in a political party that was affiliated with the church. Mr. Huu is last known to be in a labor camp in Xuan Loc and, despite his 78 years of age, he is still forced to do hard labor 8 hours a day.

By adopting these prisoners, Members of Congress can generate constant pressure on the Vietnamese authorities to release these religious leaders from detention and to truly respect freedom of religion.

SPENDING BY GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRATS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, the Washington Times reported last week that Carol Browner, head of the EPA, had led a junket to Paris at a cost of \$60,000 to the American taxpayers. Of course, surely this was done to go to some very vital environmental meetings.

Well, no. This trip was made so she and some of her friends could go to the World Cup soccer games, a \$60,000 vacation at the expense of the taxpayers for Carol Browner, our environmental administrator. Five-thousand-dollar first class round trip airfares, \$300-a-night hotel rooms and then, of course, as is so often the case with this administration, they cannot take these fancy trips without big campaign contributors.

One guest on this trip was Hassan Nemazee, an Iranian American. Hassan Nemazee has contributed at least \$125,000 to the Democratic National Committee in recent years and no telling how much to individual Democratic candidates or other committees. Democratic fund-raisers have now sold nights in the Lincoln bedroom, Commerce Department trips, even nuclear technology in return for campaign contributions. You have to wonder how much they will try to make out of the upcoming or the next Olympic games in Australia.

On another and even more wasteful topic, a GAO report released last month said the cost of the space station has now gone up to \$96 billion, over five times the original cost estimates. Today the publication Congress Daily says, "Recent reports from the GAO and the Cost Assessments and Validation Task Force on the space station have left even its biggest supporters acknowledging that problems with costs and Russian participation need to be addressed."

Also Congress Daily reports in the article today that the space station will likely be 2 years behind schedule, with each one month of delay costing \$100 million. Congress Daily reports today that the space station will likely be 2 years behind schedule, with each month of delay costing \$100 million for a program that is already over five times its original cost estimate.

Each day, every day here in Washington we hear about horrible examples of waste, fraud and abuse.

A few months ago it was reported that there was \$23 billion, \$23 billion with a "B," in waste and fraud in the Medicare program, \$23 billion. The entire State of Tennessee, our entire government in Tennessee does not spend that much in a year and a half for education and everything else that the State does. It does not spend as much